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Subject: Scope and Function of a Christian Life.

# PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

### HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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## PLYMOUTH PULPIT.

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ANY BACK NUMBERS CAN BE FURNISHED.



# SCOPE AND FUNCTION OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE.

SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 18, 1869.

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“PUT on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”—EPH. vi. 11-18.

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I NEED not say what the source of this figure is—a figure of war. After all, there is something in a soldier, and in his career, that attracts the admiration of those that hate war, and who, looking at it in its details, abhor its phenomena. The reason is worthy of speculation. Partly, I suppose, we admire war because it is the grandest organization of material forces that ever human genius executed. It is also a force that appeals to a very strong animal impulse in ourselves. We understand the conflict of material forces. There is, however, another and a better reason, I think. However frivolous the world may be, and however insincere, it never fails to admire an earnest man—a man who believes, and who is willing to put his life at risk for the sake of his faith. A man who once embraces a cause, and then puts every thing that makes him into that cause, is admirable. And nowhere else is it done as it is on the field of battle. Nowhere else, when a man has once joined a side, does he put up such stakes, evincing earnestness and intensity of his inward sincerity, as in the hour of battle. The consequence is, that, stripped of all the vices that belong to the camp, and all the weaknesses which yet cling to warriors, there has risen up to the mind of men a conception of manhood that is represented by the true warrior, which is quite above the level of ordinary trifling, worldly men. Still we admire the warrior, although we hate war. And upon this, doubtless, Scripture

proceeds in employing warlike figures, that incline men to war. Since it is in the world, and is a universally recognized experience, the Divine Teacher employs it in its nobler aspects, for the sake of inspiring men with a higher quality of that very heroism which the warrior is supposed to possess.

This is a general view of the scope and the function of a Christian life. You will observe that, as here represented, a Christian life is not the inheritance of a quiet possession. We enter upon a campaign. We enter upon a tremendous conflict. You will take notice, also, that this is a conflict which is to be waged, not by physical arms. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood"—the meaning of which is, that it is not a physical quality—"but against principalities, and spiritual wickedness in high places"—the very highest places in human governments. We war not, therefore, by sword, or by spear; but we put on the armor of God—reason, conscience, purity, courage, and faith. And these qualities, not as they are developed under the inspiration of ordinary human life, but as they are derived from the Spirit of God itself—these are the weapons with which we enter into the war. And it is, as I understand it, the comprehensive teaching here—or the recognition, if not the special teaching—that when we become Christians, we enter upon that great, world-wide, time-long battle, in which the moral sentiments of the race are arrayed against the passions. And the question is, Who shall control the vast machinery of this world? Shall it be controlled by appetites, by avarice, by selfishness in its varied forms? Or shall the vast machineries of the world be inspired and controlled by men's higher reason, and their moral sentiments? That is the real battle, in the most comprehensive statement of it.

And we have entered into that conflict just so soon as we have entered into the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. This whole world is to be reorganized. The apostle says, in one place, "That which was the Spirit is not first, but that which was the flesh." This is absolutely and literally true. This world came into the hands, first, of the flesh, or men as animal creatures. The first organizing impulses and influences, as they proceeded from the human mind, were the lowest. Hunger is said to be the first influence that develops human life and character; and the race was developed by its appetites first. They inspired industry; they inspired forecast; and then, as these qualities were inspired in multitudes, and the different rights of men and communities came into conflict, there began to be inspired from these basilar forces the light of the fact, that some consideration of one for another was necessary to a wise selfishness. And so there began to be, among the barbaric races of the world, the germination of these moral influences and forces. But, comprehensively regarded,



individual character pivoted first on the lower instincts. The household was organized round about these instincts. Society, which was but the expansion of the family, was organized around the law of force; the law of selfishness. And after the world had developed in population, and governments had spread coequal with the tribes of the earth, it was found, not that the world was not organized, but that it was an organization which clustered round about the great passionnal forces of the human soul.

Now, there is to come a time when these passionnal forces shall be expelled from the organisms of society, and their place shall be taken by pure moral sentiments. So that the laws, the maxims, the policies, and the procedures in detail of men in their individual character, in their social relations, in their industrial pursuits, in their civil politics, in their governments, and in the relation of one government to another among the nations of the earth, are all yet to proceed from the inspiration and control of man's moral and spiritual nature, as distinguished from his present selfish and passionnal nature. If we take a small instance, we can rise perhaps more easily from that as an illustration to a higher conception of this larger truth.

A man in entering upon business—upon the prosecution of merchandise, for instance—may say to himself, "This is a selfish world, and he that does not take care of himself will not be taken care of. As for me, I am bound to be made independent by riches; and I will enter into this business to make money; and nobody shall hinder me. Just as far as I must, for my own safety, I will be just, and not a whit further. Every edge shall cut, and every interest shall be to make money. If other people do not make it, that is their business. I am not going to stop for sentiment or generosity. I am determined that I will make money." Supreme, lordly selfishness is in him. He rises early and sits up late. He never loses an opportunity. Tears are to him but wasteful, sentimental brine. He thinks nothing of the rights of others, nothing of kindness, nothing of generosity, except that it is a pickpocket of his prosperity. His supreme business is, night and day, on every side, to pursue his own selfish interests. There is a business organized on selfishness. That is the animating centre; that is the controlling influence and spirit.

By the side of him is a man, equally capable, who says, "I, too, will enter upon a business life; but I believe that kindness is more profitable in commerce than unkindness. I believe that generosity is an element of thrift. I believe that a wise consideration of other men's rights is the best way to secure my own."

One man says, then, on one side, "Business organized on principles of supreme selfishness is the best business;" and the other man says, "No; I contend that business organized on principles of justice,

truth, purity, and kindness is better organized, and better adapted to make money, better adapted to keep money, better adapted to use money, better adapted to extract happiness from the money that you get and use."

Here are the two organizations of business—or, you might say, the one organization, founded, on the one side, on selfish passions and influences, and, on the other side, founded on the predominance and control of the moral sentiments in men. I hold that the world has been organized, in all its parts, chiefly and mainly just as that first man's business is organized, on the law of selfishness.

Now, it is the mission of Christianity to cast out selfishness, first from the individual heart, then from the family, then from each department of business; and in the place of selfishness to enthrone, in the heart, in social life, and in every department of business, the law of right, the law of kindness, the law of Christian benevolence, which is represented by the injunction, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." It may be impossible as yet, for an individual in society to thrive and prosper by loving his neighbor just as he does himself; but the human race will never reach its maximum, and blossom, and bring forth its final fruit, until society has so far been brought under the influence of the great law of Christian love, that society, and therefore its individuals, do act upon the principle of loving one's neighbor as we love ourselves.

This is the work that is going on, and that is to go on.

It is the aim of Christianity, then, to reorganize the globe, and to deduce laws, maxims, policies and principles from the moral sentiments. In other words, it will yet be shown that every element of human life, individual, social, and civil, can be better pursued by the inspiration of religious feeling, than by the inspiration of sordid, secular feeling. Truth will be proved to be better than deceit, always, and in all circumstances. Honor will be proved to be better than infidelity to obligations, and always. The time will come when lies will be known to be like counterfeit bills that have been stamped on their face "counterfeit," and nobody will take them. The time will come when a want of honor in obligations will be known to be so base, so worthless, that a man might as well attempt to pass pewter dollars as to pass such things in life. We have not quite yet arrived at that time, but we are on the way toward it. The time is coming when it will be universally believed that generosity is wiser, even in a business point of view, than stinginess. There is that gathereth and doth not increase; and there is that scattereth and yet increaseth one's abundance. "It is more blessed to give than to receive"—that is, commercially it is more blessed; it is more profitable. It is more blessed, too, in the sense of being joyful, to give.



A man, organizing his business on the principle of Christian benevolence is a better merchant, to say nothing about his being a better man. The time for that has not arrived, either; but it is coming. Men still believe that a certain degree of modified stinginess is good policy. Men still believe that men must look out for themselves, or nobody will look out for them; and that if other people get in their way, they must take the consequences. Men conduct business just as a locomotive makes journeys. It is an immense iron machine, going at a terrific rate; and if any thing gets on the track, it is its look out, and not the locomotive's. And so men seem to think that business is business, and that they are iron machines, going at a terrific rate; and if any thing comes in their way, they say, "Split it to pieces—knock it off from the track; do not stop; it is only a man!"

But the day is coming when it will be believed that benevolence is better, commercially, than selfishness can be; better in the store; better, comprehensively, in any department of business; better in any department of society; better in any industrial or commercial pursuit; better in national policy. The day is coming when it will be believed that trust is better than suspicion; when it will be believed that straightforward honesty in diplomacy is better than craft; when it will be believed that purity, in every view, is nobler, and far more profitable, than lust. In other words, the day is coming when men will find that the economic value of their moral sentiments is greater than the economic value of their passions, and that they serve them better. It will be only the fulfillment of the declaration, that "Godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come." The day is coming when God, the supernal good, who organized the world that it might serve him in virtue and true piety, will make it appear to all the earth and to all the universe, that he is on the side of rectitude, on the side of purity, and that providence and natural law, and, just as much, national law, and social and commercial law, and industrial law, are on the side of the moral sentiments, and not on the side of the passions and the appetites.

There is now a supreme incredulity in this. Though, practically, men do not, perhaps, reason upon it, there is an almost universal impression that, while men are in this world, and performing their duties, they must be as brick-makers are—that they must work in dirt; and that, when they have got through working in dirt, then they must clean up, and go to church. Men think, "As long as I am in the world, and doing business, I must perform my business according to the way of the world; and then, when I have got through with the necessary sacrifice to the world, I must wash up, and go to church, and be a Christian." As if that was something separate and

different from the life which they have been living in the world! There is this universal feeling; and it is, I need not say, universally practiced, almost.

The first step in the working plan of this great campaign into which we are called—namely, of regenerating, reforming, recasting the world—is the reformation of individual character, until the supreme forces of it shall be moral forces. There be many persons who, having seen the one-sidedness of church government, deride the idea of preaching the Gospel for the awakening and conversion of men. They say, “Why do you not reorganize society? Do not you see that half the evils in society come from physical conditions? Do not you see that if society were more honorable, more just in its organizations, a great deal of that which you call sin would disappear of itself; that it is but the friction caused by the working of the machinery?”

But the question comes back, “How are you going to reorganize society? It is assumed, in the word of God, that the indispensable condition of any reformation in the organization of society is to proceed upon the primary conversion of the individual heart. Therefore it is that the Gospel, when it declares that “the field is the world,” and when it undertakes the conversion of the world, so that human society shall act upon the highest conceivable reason and moral sentiment in its operations, says, “Preach the Gospel to every creature.” And it is for this simple reason that the force by which we are to organize society is to be the force of the regenerated individual. Each man is to be bowed down before God in repentance of his selfishness. Each man, by the power of the Holy Ghost, is to be so enfranchised that he can rise, by new birth, into his moral sentiments, and live there, so that every part of his nature, which belongs to his animal organization, shall be supremely controlled by the moral sentiments and by the reason. When a man lives in such a way that he derives the chief influences of his life from the Invisible, from God, his reason and the moral sentiments are supreme in him, according to the declaration of Scripture. When all the animal forces of his nature are under the supreme control of the reason and the moral sentiments, he is born again; he is godly. And whether he belongs to this creed, that creed, or the other creed, the thing to be sought in Christ Jesus is not a belief in certain technical terms, or in certain measures as applied to the divine nature: it is that we should come to that same mental condition that Christ himself forever dwelt in, in which the higher sentiments predominate, and the lower sentiments are absolutely below them and subordinate to them; and whether a man comes into that state under one influence or another, under one creed or another, he is Christly; and therefore



he is Christian. For, to be a Christian is to have all our dispositions controlled by our moral sentiments, in distinction from our selfish instincts, our pride, and our passions.

This is the first force, then, that is to be set in motion—namely, the individual soul is to recognize its allegiance to God; to take its direction from the infinite and the invisible; to be supremely controlled by those faculties that have communion with the infinite and the divine. “Except a man be born again” into this; except a man be born so that the divine in him is stronger than the human; except a man be born so that sentiment is stronger than passion; except a man be born so that faith, and hope, and love predominate over pride, and envy, and avarice, and selfishness, “he can not see the kingdom of God.”

This movement, when once established in the individual man, will give him a right to enroll himself as a Christian; and the moment he becomes a Christian, he has by this enrollment become a soldier, and has entered upon the great campaign of which we have been speaking, of transforming the world, first, by bringing others into the same individual condition that he has been brought into—by seeking their conversion, their regeneration, into a Christian life; and next, by carrying this supreme moral sentiment into all the organizations of human life in which he himself is a part.

“Ye are the light of the world,” says Christ to every man that feels he is a Christian. “Ye are the salt of the earth.” You are bound to be felt both ways—instructing men as light, and preserving men as salt.

There has been very great weakness, resulting from partialism of this truth. One set of men, seeing the evils of life, have derided mere piety. “Seeking the salvation of the soul,” they say, “may be very well when a man has nothing more to do; but if a man wants to be a Christian, let him help the poor; let him reform commerce; let him reorganize society. If that is done, half of the evils that are in our way will be taken out of the way.” Right over against these are another set, who say, “The salvation of the soul is of more importance than all outward reformations. It may be very well for things to be bettered in this world; but a man has only a short time to live, and he should make his peace with God.” That is the only thing that they think about. And God says to both of these sets of men, “Take this force that you have derived, and carry it out, so that you may breathe health into the whole.” When a man is converted so that his soul is saved, it should be a matter of profound gratitude; but to rejoice for that only, and to think of that only, is to put yourself on a higher selfishness, to be sure, but on a selfishness notwithstanding. You are to be changed, and you are to change your fellow-

men ; but the moment you believe that you are on the side of the Lord Jesus Christ, your duty lies in the direction of the individual men round about you, and of the business of life, just as much ; because you have entered upon that great campaign which means to recreate the forces of the earth, and to change the organizations of society, and fill them with moral magnanimities, and discharge from them the corrosive selfishness and predominant animalism which has controlled them. Our battle is not accomplished in our own salvation. We are God's soldiers to transform this world. The mere technical spread of the Gospel is itself a great gain ; but it is only the beginning of the work. The Gospel is spread, so far as its technical spread is concerned, into continents ; but the Gospel is to spread in another way. It is to go down into society, as well as lie upon the surface of it. As a creed, it is to lie in the disposition, and transform the processes of it. And the very first step that a man takes when he becomes a Christian, after the regeneration of his heart, is to carry those regenerating forces straight along with him. Wherever he goes, that light is to shine ; and it is to shine on business ; to shine on love ; on pleasure ; on wealth ; on honors ; on every thing. Wherever he goes, he is to carry the transforming power of the Spirit of God, so that he shall do his part as one of the soldiers of the Lord's host.

This is the larger view of Christianity, as opposed to the narrower view of the church and the sects. There are many who have almost identified Christianity with dogmatic theology. Dogmatic theology is theology reduced to a philosophical statement in any age ; and of course it will change in every age in which mental philosophy changes. Dogmatic theology, because it has been opposed, is not, therefore, to be abandoned. Dogmatic theology is to be used. You can not throw it out of the world. As long as men reason, they will insist upon finding out the reason of religious life, and study it in the relations of cause and effect, systematizing it. You can not prevent it, and you ought not to try. But after all, dogmatic theology does not express the whole of Christianity, and never did, and never will. I believe that there is a great deal of Christianity inherited ; but there is a great deal more that is not inherited. I believe in Edwards, in Dwight, in Calvin, in old John Knox, in Arminius, in all the fathers of thought and of theology. I believe there is much of Christianity that they, according to the best light they had, promulgated, which had an immense amount of truth in it ; but the essential work of Christianity, and the spirit of Christianity, is vastly larger than their dogmatic statement of theology, or of truth. So sectarian organizations, but for their thorns and prickles, are all of them wise. I believe in the organization of Christians into churches ; as I believe in the forming of churches, by elective affinities, into sects. I do not



see any harm in denominations. I would just as soon see twenty more as twenty less. I should not care if sects were multiplied until every household was, in some sense, a Christian church, maintaining its own personality, and individuality, and separateness, and distinctness from every other one.

But sects are not Christianity. They do not represent the whole of it. This church does not represent the whole of Christianity. I know that perfectly well. Nor does the Episcopal Church. It represents some elements in Christianity better than we do; and some elements not so well. And the Methodist Church represents some parts of Christianity better than any other denomination. And the Presbyterian Church—there are many things that the world would miss if that church were to sink out of view. All of them are joined in certain great elements of truth. And then, the specialties which distinguish one from another usually are specialties that have in them a truth which is nowhere else developed with such breadth and force. And while each has a common stock of Christianity, which unites and affiliates it to all other denominations, for a special work it is better than any other denomination. And Christianity is represented by the sum of all the sects, and not by any one of them.

Are not some of them nearer to Christ than others? Very likely they may be. But it is not for any sect to say that it is the one. It is right to believe it; but if it is believed, it should be believed with all modesty. It should be believed without positive certainty. But I think it better to take the larger view, and look upon the church of Christ on earth as a comprehensive whole, represented by all the organized churches.

I go further than that. When you have taken that hoary old sect, the Greek Church; when you have taken the next sect, the Roman Church; and then, when you have taken the other sects in the Protestant Church; and when you have agglomerated them all, if you say, "Do they altogether express the whole of Christianity?" I say, No. God is working by other instruments than these. The church of God is not merely composed of ecclesiastical organizations, which men call churches. He works by the whole concourse of nature. All laws that rule the heavens, all laws that rule the earth, and all natural laws, or laws in natural science, are God's instruments in religion. All organizations in society that ward off evil, or do good, are a part of God's comprehensive machinery, by which he is to transform the world. All great industrial callings have something in them that is working toward the higher and toward the better, if they be really civilized, and are under the influence of Christian feelings. And when you look for God's kingdom, do not look inside of a sect, or inside of an individual. What individual man is large

enough to say, "I epitomize Christianity"? What sect can say, "I represent universal Christianity"? All of them together can not say that. It takes the sum total of all benign influences on the globe, running through all generations and all periods of time, to represent the whole of God Almighty's work.

If, therefore, you would know the creed of Christianity in this larger statement of it, Peter spake it, after he had been called to Cornelius, when he said, "In every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted by him." There is the comprehensive creed. "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart"—there is the charter—"and thy neighbor as thyself." In every nation, he that does so fear and love God, and work righteousness, whether he be in the church or out of it, whether he understand theology or not, whether he belong with you or not, is accepted of God. And though he may not join your church, or be able to go into it, he belongs to the church universal, and is one of God's working soldiers.

If you would make an inventory of the whole business of religion in the world, turn to the 4th chapter of Philippians, and read there the 8th verse: "Whatsoever things are true"—all the things that are set down in the Bible and in the Catechism, all the things that are set down in good and pious books, and then all the things that are not, if they are true. Let the age fermenting, developing, bring up a great truth that never before has been seen, and Christianity puts a hand on its head and says, "It is mine." Let there come up a nobler refinement than ever was developed or thought of, and you can not array that against Christianity, as something apart from it. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things—ponder them." Whatever is beautiful, whatever is pure, whatever is noble, now and hereafter, in the infinite developments of all coming times—Christ, by the power of inspiration, swept round about it his hand, and, by the blood-stained circle, limited his sphere and his dominion by nothing short of infinite excellence; and all these things are his.

It is to this large conception of religion and Christianity that I invite you—not to the narrowness and the fiery passions of a sect, not to the degrading notion of religion as a mere personal insurance of your own selves. "The earth is the Lord's." The earth is yet to be redeemed to holy uses. All men are to be transformed, and all society is to be redeemed. And if you become a child of Christ, and a member of the Church of Christ, first your heart must be so changed that the moral elements shall predominate in you, and then you must carry out, so far as in you lies, the same victorious change in every direction of human life.



In view of this exposition, I remark :

1. Men are called by religion to a personal reformation, and then to the reformation of the whole world in which they live. You are to carry Christ's spirit into every relation of life, and to become a witness, and a martyr, if need be, in it. A little child, beginning to love Christ, and desiring to witness for Christ, comes home to its unconverted parents, and to brothers and sisters that are willful and wayward, and seeks there to carry out the law of love. Its temper, quite infirm, is often lost. Alas, that of all the things that we lose, nothing is found so certainly again as our temper ! The little child comes home, and its temper is often disturbed, often stirred up ; and still, it means to be a witness for Christ. And it says in its little heart, "I do love Christ ; and I mean that every thing I do shall please him." It has read, "In honor preferring one another ;" and it attempts, in the household, to prefer the happiness of its brothers and sisters. It refuses to join in the little deceits that belong to them. It refuses to conceal, when questioned, their little peculations. It comes to spiteful grief in consequence. And the little child is not old enough to know any thing about the great laws of society, and the great laws of nature. Just converted, it is undertaking to live so that the best part of itself shall govern itself ; and then it is undertaking to live so that, in its little companionships, the best part of it shall all the time rule in its conduct.

Now, no child can undertake that, without having the epitome of the experience of every Christian in the whole world. The moment a child begins to act in this spirit, his brothers and sisters will try to make the child mad—not exactly out of spite ; but they want to see what it will do. It will be vexed, and its feelings will be tried, in a thousand ways ; but yet, the little martyr says to itself, "I wish I could do better ; and I will do the best I can." It holds fast to its purpose, and tries to love, and to bear patiently the injuries that are heaped upon it. Ah sweet little child ! you are walking in the ways of the witnesses of Christ. Small as the sphere is, little as you seem to be doing, He who will bless the soul that gives a cup of cold water to a little child, certainly will not neglect to treasure up a memory of what that little child, in its inexperience, attempts to do, that it may follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Wherever this little child goes—"except ye be converted, and become as little children," attempting to do the same thing, "ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven"—wherever this little child goes, it is attempting, first, to govern itself and then, in its intercourse with men, to act on these principles of higher moral sentiment, higher moral truth. Disdaining craft, disdaining lies, disdaining all cruelty and selfishness, putting all lower elements under its feet, this little child is trying to be truer, purer,

more industrious, more obliging, more faithful in every obligation And it epitomizes the whole development of adult life.

2. More particularly and minutely, let me address those who preach Christianity from the side of fastidious taste, and are in danger of betraying the Master through their imagination, and through their love of that which is fit, orderly, and beautiful. Religion must not be selfish—not even if it be the selfishness of the highest quality. We have no right to be Christians simply on the ground that so we shall save our souls. We *shall* save our souls; but to come into religion as a mere soul insurance, is selfishness. We have no right to go into religion merely because we shall thus gain joy. We have no right, certainly, to enter into a religious life with this feeling: “I am determined that I will establish a perfect, symmetrical manhood in my own self. I do not mean to mix up with the quarrels of the sects. I am not going into this coarse and vulgar temperance movement. I am not going to engage in those pursuits which will bring me in contact with life in its grosser forms. I am going to let the stream flow through the kennel, and am going to stand in the palace of my resolve a clean man. I mean to be a pure man, and I mean to do what is right; and I will spend my life in fashioning myself into a perfect Christian.”

I imagine General Sherman saying so in his western campaign. I imagine him putting on his regimentals, and saying, “As for going through all these dusty roads, and as to going down among these dirty, lousy soldiers, I am going to keep myself apart. I intend to study all the books of warfare. I intend to know every thing that ever was thought or known on the subject of military tactics. But, as for going out into the field, and getting wet, and hungry, and tired, especially among these frowzy officers, I do not think much of that!” What would you think of a general whose thought, in a campaign, was to take care of himself? Yet there are a great many persons that do not want to be converted in a Methodist meeting because there are common, plain folks there. They do not want to go where common folks are. Bless their dear aristocratic souls! They are going to surprise God with the beauty of their conversion! Oh! they, black as crows, are going to come out now, pretty soon, as nightingales, or canaries, and sing in heaven; and God is going to say, “What is that! *What is that!*” Men and women when converted are going to be furbelowed, clad in silk and broadcloths! It is so comfortable, you know, to be converted under satin, perfumed, ringed, wristleted, jeweled, and especially, belonging to the “select circles”—the circles where they are more selfish than anywhere else; where they use fastidiousness and privilege as a means of making themselves meaner and narrower; as a means of calking and



stopping up every outflow of large sympathy that connects them with the brotherhood of men. Polite folks, and fashionable folks—that only commit fashionable sins, I suppose—are going to be converted on carpets, and in silks and white cambrics, and with beautiful opals on their fingers; and when they are converted, they do not mean to go down to these dirty mission-schools. They do not mean to meddle with temperance or anti-slavery. Nor are they going down into the dirty pool of politics—oh! no, not they! What are they going to do? Well, they are going to fly so high that they can not see the world any more. That is to say, they are going to the top of Mont Blanc; and they will be blunker than the top of the mountain when they get there! Ah! how many icicles do you think there will be on the gate of heaven, or on the eaves of the temple there? And yet, these folks that mean to be so fine, so select, are nothing in the world but icicles, cold, selfish, dead—absolutely dead!

The man that enters into religion must follow God. And what thought He, when he took the crown, every beam of which was brighter than the shining of a thousand suns, and laid it by? What thought He when, disrobing himself of power, taste, and faculty, he bowed his head, and, trailing through the sky, became a man, and as a man humbled himself, and became obedient unto death—even the death of the cross? The most odious and reputation-blasting death that man's ingenuity had developed—all this had combined at the centre-point of the cross, as the sign and symbol of degradation; and that was the death that he chose, that he might identify himself with men, and not be ashamed to call them brethren. Go down from the king to the poorest servant in the king's palace; go down from the servant to the poorest underling; go lower than the underling, down to the prison, and from the prison down to the dungeon of the palace, and, in the dungeon, down till you find the man that has been the longest from the light, and is the weakest, the poorest, the most filthy, and the most forgotten of men—go down and say to him, "I am thy brother: thou and I will never part." God, from infinite heights, plunging down through ranks and gradations, came to the earth, and on the earth went down, down, down, until he found the lowest and the least point; and he said to the groveling wretch that was there—the slave of the slaves of men—"I am not ashamed to be called thy brother." And now he has opened his banners, and he has preached his Gospel, and sent out his disciples; and let me see that miserable jeweled creature, fashionable and fastidious, who says, "I am going to follow the meek and lowly Jesus by cutting my acquaintance with the vulgar cares of the dirty world. I am going to be a select Christian, and seclude myself from these things." Can you, and be a

follower of Christ? Religion means work. Religion means work in a dirty world. Religion means peril; blows given, but blows taken as well. Religion means transformation. The world is to be cleaned by somebody; and you are not called of God if you are ashamed to scour and scrub.

When, therefore, I call you to a religious life, do not suppose that I do not call you to a life which shall transform the imagination, enrich the understanding, cultivate the heart, and the conscience, and rectify your own passions. And do not suppose that I call you to that only. If you are truly transformed, and if the spirit of Christ be in you, you will feel yourself bound to go out as a light of the world, to carry forth your sentiments, and your nobler feelings, as the salt of the earth; and you will become witnesses for Christ every where.

Oh! that there were more witnesses in the household! How, right from the orb of true Christian experience, if you had the shield of faith, would fall those fiery traits of temper; those waspish and venomous cares; those ten thousand unsymmetries of affection; all this dullness, this forgetfulness, this irritableness; all those things which disfigure the individual, and interrupt and mar the beauty of the household!

You are called, next to personal holiness, to carry the reformation of your faith into the household. Every step that you take in the world, you are bound to take as a reformer. Not a single step must you take that will traverse a moral principle. And if the age has not come, if the time has not yet arrived, your business is to do, and to suffer, and bear witness for that which is right, true, pure, just, and good. And the world never will advance rapidly until we have more martyrs in common things, more witnesses in common places. There never was a time in the history of the world when there were more temptations to selfishness than now. And in our own age and community the temptations seem to me to be coming in like a flood. We have overcome, in an awful struggle, temptations to arrogance and domination, but, right in the place of that terrific demon, stands now, looming up and gathering form, the figure of Mammon, threatening to be even more dangerous than Despotism was. And no man is called to the Christian life who is not likewise to see to it that this nation, and the several governments of the States, and all the departments of human society, are defended and rescued from this terrific invasion. I know that honor has gone down before it. I know that virtuous purposes have been melted as wax before the fierce blow-pipe. I know how hard it is for men to stand in their integrity under mighty, beating temptations. Nevertheless, somebody must stand, and there must be men that can stand, in the midst of Babylon, and bear witness for Christ, or else the field will never be won.



Young men, I do not call you to come into this church that I may cover over a common life with a varnish of piety. I exhort you most earnestly to become Christians, and to join yourselves to the fellowship of Christians; but what I mean when I say these things, is not that you shall have a singing hope; not that you shall have an easy spiritual life. I call you to enlist under the banners of that army which means the re-creation of business, the re-creation of industry, the re-creation of commerce, and the re-creation of politics. I call upon you to join that host, that mean yet, one day, to see truth, conscience, love, generosity, honor, and purity taking complete control of the machinery of human life, casting out the foul devil of selfishness, casting out the demons of pride and of impurity. I believe that the day is yet to come when all the machineries of society will be controlled by truth, by purity, by sublime duty. I call you to be soldiers in that great warfare that is to bring to pass this victory. It may not be in your day—oh! no, not in your day; nor in mine. I shall die long, long before the victory is completed. I can not ask to live longer. Twenty years ago, in my most extravagant mood, I would not have dared to say to Christ, “Let me live to see slavery destroyed;” and yet I have lived to see it destroyed. And one such coronation, one such epoch lived through, I should be indeed most unreasonable to ask to live through many more great victories. God does not give it to man to see many such victories. I shall die before I see commerce and industry fairly regenerated. Some of you will live to see the beginnings of it. Children that are here to-day will see what will have begun to transpire, when I have slept for years. But I foresee it. I preach it. My word will not die when I am dead. The doctrine is out, and you can not put it back. That seed has sprouted, and you can not unsprout it. Religion means the transformation of the individual soul, as a part of the transformation of the race, and of all the organizations of the race. It is universal. It fills all space, and is to fill all time; and it is to be worked for in that spirit; and every man is to swear, first for himself, and then for his household, and then for the community in which he lives, and then for his nation, and then for the nations of the earth, and for the race; and, blessed be God, I have lived to have a chance to preach it. I have lived to see that snare broken which has led men to believe that the pulpit which was organized to preach the Gospel must not deal with the secular affairs of society; that the pulpit, whose field is the world, should be hedged in by narrow sectarianism, hedged in by the most penurious creeds, hedged in by half a dozen stock subjects; and that while slaves were being ground down by the heel of oppression, and mammon was rolling her mighty car over myriads of men, ministers “must preach about

the meek and lowly Jesus," and not go out of their place. I have lived to see Sunday redeemed. I have lived to see that a man may pull an ox, or an ass, or even *a man* out of the ditch on Sunday. I have lived to see that humanity means humanity; that it means justice for those that can not achieve justice for themselves; that it means the reformation of morals; that it means the reformation of commerce, and of political economy; that it means the reformation of every thing that touches man anywhere. I have lived to see that day, and to help bring it on. And it is enough. As to the victory, I shall see that, too; but ah! with eyes better than these that grow dim with age; with a head no longer touched with gray, but where, wearing the white linen of the saints, and bearing white flowers of the heavenly land, that never wilt, from among the perfect company, I shall look back, and, in sympathy with the work of God on earth, see the victory of this truth.

Young men! come into this glorious work. Do not think that religion is a poor, miserable, mystic experience. It is the most glorious enterprise that man was ever invited to achieve. I call you to be better men, lordlier in the stature of your ambition, and I call you to join yourselves to God that you may find yourselves. I call you to enter upon your business of every kind with nobler aspirations, with a better purpose, and to count yourselves Christ's, and to belong to that army who are laboring night and day, by tears, by prayers, by instruments of every kind, to re-create the earth, that there may be a new heaven and a new earth in which shall dwell righteousness. This is worthy of you, and it is honoring to God. And yet, ere long, you shall hear—or some shall—the radiant angel, flying, proclaim, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and he shall reign!"



### PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

O OUR Father! reach forth thine arms, and take us that have fallen to the ground, up above our weakness, higher than our own strength can carry us. Lift us into the sphere where thou dwellest, that our thoughts may also partake of the sonship which we have; for thou dost no longer call us servants, but friends. Blessed God, if we are thy friends, show forth to us this morning this relationship. May we understand it by the consciousness of friendship in us. May we know thee by that which rises within us to call for thee. Let the echo of thy nature sound in us. Let there be something that shall long to say, Father. May there be that in our hearts that shall hunger—hunger for love greater than that which one man can give to another. We have tried the world, and we bless thee for it. There are many joys in it. There is much in it that makes us wish to live. And all the sweet friendships of life—how are they clothing us as with a garment! And how hast thou ordained praise in the household and in the individual heart! And how hast thou caused the very natural world round about us to smile and bless us! And yet, who of us is satisfied? What bounty ever left us without a yearning



and longing for something more? Is it that we have come from heaven, and these dim dreams of lost glory come back? or is it the intimation of thy Spirit—the earnest of our inheritance? Is it not that thou dost, by the Holy Spirit, strive in us, making prayers for us with groanings which can not be uttered, and making supplications in us? Art thou not drawing us toward thyself as the real supply of the soul? Thine is love which perfects itself. Thine is a companionship that leaves nothing to be desired—that still lifts us, excites our imagination, and more than fulfills every ideal. Thine is a companionship that never wearies. There are no pauses in it. We are never with thee conscious of divine weakness. There are no flaws in that perfection of nature which thou bringest to us. All our experience of life with thee has been blessed, and our only sorrow has been when we have fallen from the blessedness of thine intercourse.

Now, grant, we beseech of thee, more of that help by which we may live as seeing Him who is invisible. We are glad to be joined to thee. We are glad that our life flows with thy life. We are glad that thou hast been pleased not only to call us friends and children, but to make us to feel that we are fellow-laborers. We are glad that we are set to think the things which thou dost ponder, and that we are enkindled with the same affections which blaze in thee, and that we are working for the same great ends, or may work for them, which concern thy soul, and that we may move with the magnitude and the grandeur of thy government, and that we may take part and lot in all the work of thine hands. We pray that we may enter into the divine life; that we may find food for our souls, joy in our solitude, consolation in our bereavements, light in our loneliness and darkness, strength when we are unstable, and courage in the hour of fear. Grant that still—in all moods, in every necessity, in the soul's deepest and innermost want, though inarticulate—we may find thee all in all.

And we beseech of thee, O Lord our God! in those hours, pulseless, not calm but sluggish, when we can feel nothing but pain that we can not heal; in those hours when we believe in nothing but death, with a living consciousness to realize the deadness—we beseech of thee that in those hours of temptation thou wilt grant us thy presence. Say to us that heaven is real. Say to us that thou art, and that thou art the rewarder of those that diligently seek thee. In those hours when we turn away from strife, when it seems to us as if the labor of our life were folly, when the tides of human wickedness sweep victoriously on, and all that we can do is feeble and helpless, as are the smittings of a child's hand upon the ocean—in these hours of discouragement, may we be taught of God. Behold, is not the kingdom of God as a leaven which a woman hid in three measures of meal? Is not the kingdom of God as the smallest of all seeds, which straightway and by and by shall become a tree? Grant that we may live, not by the measurement of our senses, nor by the judgments which are framed by men of the flesh. May we draw our inspirations from the great and infinite world beyond. May our most substantial beliefs and truths be those that are higher than our senses. May we compel our senses to follow our reason. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt give lordship in us to the soul-powers, that conscience, and faith, and love, and hope may predominate; that pride and selfishness, and every malign and evil feeling, may be reduced to subjection; that the work of God may be established in us; that we may follow thee in all obedience, and gentleness, and purity, and in all hopefulness and joyfulness.

And we pray that thou wilt grant to every one in thy presence, according to his circumstances and necessity, the blessing of the Sabbath. Give rest to every heart. May fear fly away. May doubts disappear. As thou hast rolled away the night, and as no storm knows the path by which to walk the heavens to-day, and all is full of radiance and of God, so in every soul grant that there may be lifted up above it the atmosphere and the arch of the very heaven. May every one feel the nearness of God to him to-day. And as thou didst interpret thyself in the garden to Mary in the pronouncing of her name, so may every one have his name spoken of God audibly to the soul to-day, that all the promises may be joined to each consciousness—that every one may feel that God is his.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant, in the presence of thy light and thy power, that all those things which, by inequality and misadjustment in life, are cares and torments, may be as are the hills from the mountain-top when all things are seemingly level. May we be lifted so high to-day that the things which aforesaid have distressed and troubled us may trouble us no more. If there are any that this morning remember their sorrows, why should they not mount into their joys, and sit enthroned in them? Theirs thou art.

Theirs thy presence is through life. They are to triumph in dying; they are to dwell with thee in the kingdom of thy Father's glory; and why should they go mourning?

O Lord! we beseech of thee, if there are those that are in mourning, before whom there is no brightness, have compassion on them. Look upon the woe-stricken who have no future. Look upon those that bury their dead as they that cast stones into the sea, that sink to the bottom and come up no more forever. Look upon those to whom the grave is not the gate of heaven, but an abyss. Lord Jesus, hast thou no compassion upon those souls that do not know thee, nor love thee, nor know the infinite heaven, and the blessedness of the Saviour that never died, though he passed beyond?

Reveal to all that are mourning the consolations of the Holy Ghost. Vouchsafe to them those teachings by which they shall see the future, and the blessedness of it. And we pray that thou wilt rebuke those in thy presence whose troubles come from their follies. Rebuke us all. While we resent the rebukes of men, may we humble ourselves before God, and ask for chastisements, that our pride may not predominate; that we may not be carried captive in the world; that we may still feel how weak we are, and how needful of God; that we may humble ourselves before God; that we may repent of our sins—even of the brightest and most joy-bearing transgressions; that we may be as little children corrected by the father's hand. And we pray that thou wilt ordain peace for those who are pure. Bring them into the presence of God, that they may see him.

Bless the mourners, and all that follow thee in poverty of spirit. Grant, we pray thee, that thy word and thy work may prosper in this congregation, and in all thy churches in this city, of every name. Unite thy people more perfectly together. May they not seek the things that divide, nor longer spend time in building division walls. May they seek rather to unite in the things in which they agree, and to love one another, and to give the undivided and unspent force of hope and love to the work of evangelizing the world. Wilt thou cause, O Lord! that more be raised up to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ's Gospel, and to spread abroad that Gospel in the destitute places of our land.

Bless schools and seminaries of learning; and bless the cause of intelligence as represented in newspapers, and tracts, and books for the diffusion of useful knowledge. We pray that intelligence may be associated with virtue, and that both of them may work for piety. And may the whole of this nation be evangelized, and educated of God. Look abroad upon thy work everywhere. We thank thee that the times stir, that thou art awaking the dead, that nations that have long lain seemingly buried are coming to life. Command that the napkin be taken away from around about their head, as they come forth from their sepulchre. Command that they may so give light and knowledge to the people, which shall make them in virtue and intelligence so strong that none shall be powerful enough to hold them down. And so, by the growth of human souls, by the growth of virtue and intelligence, by Christian manhood, make men mightier than man, so that there shall be no monarch so strong as his people; so that all people shall be able to defend their rights—their rights of manhood.

Let thy kingdom come. Let thy will be done in all the world. Fill the world with thy glory.

We ask it for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

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### PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

OUR Father, wilt thou bless the word of truth spoken to every heart. May we not doubt thy truth. May we not look out upon the darkness, and refuse to believe in the morning. Because it is storming, and winter is on the earth, let us not be faithless of the spring. Oh! grant that we may believe that thou shalt yet be the God of all the earth, and that every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that thou art Lord, to the glory of God. Hear our prayer. Accept the song which we shall offer thee. Go with us from our worship. Be with us through the day, through life, in dying, and in living again in thine heavenly kingdom; which we ask for Christ's sake. *Amen.*



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